



NAVY HISTORY MATTERS

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Welcome to Navy History Matters—our weekly compilation of articles, commentaries, and blogs related to history and heritage. Every week we'll gather the top-interest items from a variety of media and social media sources and then link you to related content at NHHC's website (history.navy.mil), your authoritative source for Navy history.

★ New Exhibit at Hampton Roads Naval Museum

After a months-long process to build it, the new exhibit, *The Ten Thousand-Day War at Sea: The U.S. Navy in Vietnam, 1950-1975*, is now open at the Hampton Roads Naval Museum. Museum staff members and contractors completely retooled more than 4,700 square feet of gallery space from a World War II and Cold War focus to that of the [Navy's role during the Vietnam War](#). The gallery's transformation included everything from new printed graphics and text panels to touchscreen monitors, overhead projectors, and artifact display cases. Along with new artifacts and displays, the immersive exhibit features oral history interviews with Hampton Roads-area veterans. For more information about the exhibit, [read the blog](#) at [The Sextant](#).



Photo Link: <https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/2019/11/06/naval-museum-opens-new-immersive-vietnam-exhibit/>

★ After 75 Years, Explorers Discover Missing WWII Submarine

On Nov. 10, undersea explorers announced they believe they have discovered [World War II](#)-era [USS Grayback](#), lost 75 years ago, off the coast of Okinawa, Japan. Explorer Tim Taylor and his wife Christine Dennison's Lost 52 Project announced the [submarine](#) was found 1,400 feet below the ocean's surface on June 5. "We do not tell people that we're looking for these because we don't want to disappoint people, and we don't want to blast it across the Internet until it's done properly through the Navy," said Taylor. In January 1944, *Grayback* sailed out of Pearl Harbor for the South China Sea and was attacked by Japanese naval aircraft in the East China Sea on Feb. 26, 1944. The submarine was listed as overdue, presumed lost on March 30, 1944. For more, [read the article](#) at *Time*.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhnc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhnc-series/nh-series/NH-53000/NH-53771.html>

★ A Family Tradition

Hugh Wyman Howard and his brother Curtis William Howard attended the U.S. Naval Academy in the late 1930s, separated by a year in graduation classes—1937 and 1938. The Howard family has a long history in the U.S. Navy that was influenced by their father, Jasper Victor Howard, who served as a Navy doctor. The Howard brothers were junior officers when [World War II](#) broke out. Curtis was in [naval aviation](#), and Hugh narrowly missed the [Pearl Harbor attack](#) while onboard [USS Lexington](#). Hugh would later receive the [Silver Star](#) for his actions during the [Sicily landings](#). At the [Battle of Midway](#), Curtis served as the operations officer with Torpedo Squadron 3, operating Douglas TBD Devastators. His gallantry is captured in his [Navy Cross citation](#), which notes that he, "in the face of tremendous anti-aircraft fire and overwhelming fighter opposition, pressed home his attack to a point where it became relatively certain that, in order to accomplish his mission, he would probably sacrifice his life." For more, [read the blog](#) by Rear Adm. [H. Wyman Howard III](#)—Hugh's grandson—at [The Sextant](#).



Photo Link: <https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/2019/11/06/a-family-tradition/>

★ Century of Service Shows Need for Shipyard Investment at Pearl Harbor

They put out hundreds of fires after the [Pearl Harbor attack](#), cut men out of the hulls of sunken ships, repaired disabled engines, and organized an ammunition-passing party. Just six months after the attack, shipyard workers at the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard had to perform yet another miracle. They had the task of repairing the badly damaged [USS Yorktown](#) that had been severely damaged during the [Battle of the Coral Sea](#). The miracle was that it took a mere 72 hours to complete—just in time for the pivotal [Battle of Midway](#). Just as shipyards were vital for national defense during [World War II](#), it remains so today. Of course, much has changed since the shipyards were built. The [Navy's four shipyards](#) are more than 100 years old, and they were designed to build ships of wood, sail, and coal. For more on the revitalization of the Navy's shipyards, [read the blog](#) by Capt. Greg Burton at [Navy Live](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/wars-and-events/world-war-ii/midway/80-G-13065.html>

★ First African-American Blue Angels Commander

On Nov. 15, 1994, 25 years ago, Cmdr. Donnie L. Cochran became the first [African-American](#) commanding officer and flight leader of the Navy's Flight Demonstration Squadron, the [Blue Angels](#). Two years earlier, during his initial stint, he was the first African-American pilot to fly with the Blue Angels. In 1946, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. [Chester Nimitz](#) had a vision to create a flight exhibition team to raise the public's interest in [naval aviation](#) and boost Navy morale. Since its inception, the Blue Angels have performed for more than 450 million fans worldwide. For more, check out the [history of the Blue Angels infographic](#) at [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://catalog.archives.gov/OpaAPI/media/6486916/content/arcmedia/stillpix/330-cfd/1993/DN-ST-93-05447.jpeg>

★ 40 Years Later: How the Iran Hostage Crisis Shaped the Future of Special Operations

Forty years ago, Iranian militants seized 98 people at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, marking the beginning of the Iran Hostage Crisis. It would not be until 444 days later that all the hostages were released. During the ordeal, on April 24, 1980, then-President [Jimmy Carter](#) signed off on Operation Blue Light (Eagle Claw)—an attempt to rescue the remaining 52 hostages. The mission required aspects of the Navy, Army, Air Force, and Marines to meet at a salt flat about 200 miles from Tehran known as Desert One. Ultimately, the mission was aborted after a series of blows took place, including the deaths of eight U.S. servicemembers. Although the mission was unsuccessful, it played a pivotal role shaping the future of [special operations](#). For more, [read the article](#) in *Navy Times*. Also, read Adm. [James L. Holloway's rescue mission report](#) at [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.militarytimes.com/flashpoints/2019/11/04/40-years-later-how-the-iran-hostage-crisis-shaped-the-future-of-special-operations/>

★ One Big Adventure: WWII Veteran Recalls Largest Navy Battle in History

He was just 18 years old and tired of milking cows. Robert Rayburn was not drafted to fight in [World War II](#), so he turned in his farm deferment and volunteered for the U.S. Navy. By mid-1944, he was aboard the destroyer escort [USS John C. Butler](#) enroute to Honolulu. His ship's mission during the war was to provide screening for convoys. Rayburn was one of six men who operated the ship's guns. Over the course of his deployment, he participated in a number of battles, including Morotai, Lingayen Gulf, [Leyte Gulf](#), and [Iwo Jima](#). "It's the largest Navy battle in history," Rayburn said of Leyte Gulf. "There was 13 of us little ships, and we were outgunned—could only shoot about seven miles—and we were up against Japanese battleships that had a range of 15 miles. When I think about it now, it's very scary, but then we was just—it was part of the adventure. At no time was I ever afraid." For more, [read the article](#) in the *Chattanooga Times Free Press*.



Photo Link: <https://www.timesfreepress.com/news/local/story/2019/nov/06/one-big-adventure-world-war-ii-veterrecalls-l/507188/#images-2>

★ The Sailor and the Super Bomb

It was Nov. 1, 1952. Junior Jennings was just 15 miles away onboard USS *Oak Hill* when he became a part of history—the United States’ first detonation of the hydrogen bomb at Eniwetok in the Marshall Islands. “I was behind the gun turret with my head between my arms with my eyes closed,” Jennings, 86, recalled in a written statement about Operation Ivy. “This blast sent a light brighter than the noonday sun through my arms. I noticed afterward a heatwave came, and then they told us we could look at the mushroom cloud.” Edward Teller, who was part of the Manhattan Project during [World War II](#), developed the hydrogen bomb. The bomb was about 1,000 times more powerful than any conventional nuclear weapon at the time and temporarily gave the advantage to the United States over the Soviet Union during the [nuclear arms race](#) of the [Cold War](#). For more, [read the article](#) in *Navy Times*.



Photo Link: <https://www.navytimes.com/military-honor/salute-veterans/2019/11/03/the-sailor-and-the-super-bomb/>

★ NHHC Webpage of the Week

On Nov. 13, 1942, all five Sullivan brothers were lost when [USS Juneau](#) was destroyed during the [Naval Battle of Guadalcanal](#). In commemoration of this tragic event, this week’s webpage of the week is [The Sullivan Brothers](#), located in the [disasters and phenomena](#) section of [NHHC’s website](#). On this page are links to a number of resources, including blogs, transcripts of the brothers’ service, U.S. Navy policy regarding family members serving together at sea, *Juneau* and Battle of Guadalcanal information, digital resources about the battle, and information on ships named in honor of the Sullivans. Check out this page today and learn more about what happened on this day in history.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/us-people/s/sullivan-brothers/nh-52362.html>

★ Today in Naval History

On Nov. 12, 1942, Lt. Cmdr. [Bruce McCandless](#) displayed superb initiative by assuming command of [USS San Francisco](#) during the [Naval Battle of Guadalcanal](#) after all other personnel on the navigating and signal bridges were rendered unconscious, killed, or wounded. McCandless boldly continued to engage the enemy, leading *San Francisco* to victory. For his “conspicuous gallantry and exceptionally distinguished service,” McCandless received the Medal of Honor on Dec. 12, 1942. Soon after the battle, he was promoted to commander.



For more dates in naval history, including your selected span of dates, see [Year at a Glance](#) at [NHHC’s website](#). Be sure to check this page regularly, as content is updated frequently.

Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/us-people/m/mccandless-bruce/80-g-31578.html>